

some amount of money—they do not know how much—theoretically is going to be available and they have taken assurances from the administration, which plays no role in determining what resources are available in the next budget resolution to write a farm bill.

It is a dereliction of duty. I think they have let down the people who they purport to represent by sending up a letter like this saying: Do not worry about it, the money is somehow going to be there. I say to my colleagues, do not be fooled. The money is in the budget now. If we do not use the money that is in the budget now, it is very likely not going to be available next year.

When we write the next budget resolution, we are going to be facing a totally different circumstance than we faced in the spring of this year when we wrote the budget. Does anybody not understand that? Does anybody not see the dramatic transformation from a weakening economy, from a sneak attack on this country, from the need for substantial funds for rebuilding the country, for defending the Nation for counterterrorism efforts?

Somehow the money is going to come from somewhere to write a new farm bill. I say to my colleagues, there is money in the budget this year to write a new farm bill, and if we do not use the money that is available this year, you can forget that same amount of money being available next year. It is not going to happen.

The economy is weakening. That means less revenue. On the spending side, we are having to spend more money on defense, on counterterrorism, and on rebuilding those areas that were damaged in the attacks. That means everything else next year is going to be very squeezed. That means there is not going to be the same amount of money available next year to write a decent farm bill. Frankly, the money that has been provided in this year's budget is just barely enough to write a decent farm bill. It is, in fact, less—it will provide less than farmers have gotten each of the last 3 years. Not just a little bit less, substantially less; in fact, 26 percent less on average than they have gotten under the disaster assistance bills of the last 3 years.

So nobody should be under any illusion about the money being available next year. Nobody should be under any illusion. The administration is in no position to help with this problem because they have no role—none, zero—in writing the budget resolution that will be adopted next spring. So these farm organizations that have run out, supposedly representing their members, and told the leadership here, don't worry about getting the job done this year, have done an enormous disservice to their membership—enormous.

What are they going to say when we get to write a new farm bill next year and the money is dramatically re-

duced? What are they going to say to their members then, after counseling delay? What are they going to say to them? What is the administration going to say? Because this administration has made clear they don't want us to write a new farm bill this year; they don't want to spend the amount of money that is in the budget. Unfortunately, what that means is that the rural parts of this country, those that are dependent on agriculture, are going to be in very grave danger of being left out and left behind as we write, ironically enough, a stimulus package for the national economy.

These farm organizations that have written the leadership here saying the resources necessary to fund a farm bill above the current baseline will be available next year are giving very bad advice. They are wrong. They are just as wrong as wrong can be. It is really hard to understand how they would ever have written such a letter without doing their homework first because they have let down their membership.

Mr. DAYTON. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. CONRAD. I am happy to yield.

Mr. DAYTON. I say to the distinguished chairman of the Budget Committee, who you might say was instrumental in getting this \$73 billion into the budget resolution for the sake of the farmers from North Dakota, Minnesota, and elsewhere across the country, I received one of these phone calls asking if we couldn't hold off on the farm bill until next year. It seems not coincidental that this letter follows that conversation by just a day, in fact, in my case.

I am wondering if the Senator from North Dakota thinks there is some connection with these organizations, that they have been persuaded somehow to write a letter. As you say, why would they be contrary to the interest of their own member farmers? As part of this desire of some, and I guess the administration, to delay a farm bill until next year, what do you think the consequences of that will be?

Mr. CONRAD. I say to my colleague, there is no question in my mind what the consequences will be. No. 1, substantially less money to write a new farm bill than the money left in this budget.

No. 2, that means a totally inadequate farm bill.

No. 3, that means hard-pressed farmers would be in even more serious shape because we failed to use the money that was available in this year's budget to write a farm bill that would strengthen their economic condition.

I want to make this as clear as it can be. They say they have received assurances that the resources necessary to fund a farm bill above the current baseline will be available next year.

No. 1, there is no statement there about how much above the current baseline. The current baseline was predicated on the old farm bill—the old farm bill that was a total failure, the

old farm bill that required us to write four disaster assistance bills in the last 4 years. This has no assurance that it is going to be the same amount of money that is in the budget this year. In fact, we know the administration doesn't want us to have the same amount of money. They have proposed a dramatic cut from what is in the budget this year to write a new farm bill. That is the dirty little secret.

They proposed a substantial cut. Instead of over the next 5 years \$40 billion being available, they have said only \$25 billion ought to be available. Guess what. You can't write a decent farm bill with \$25 billion when the money that is in this year's budget is already substantially below what we had the last 3 years to assist farmers at this time of economic crisis. We are already, in the funding that is in this budget, 26 percent below what has been provided in each of the last 3 years.

These farm organizations, somehow, got sold a bill of goods. I suspect it is from the Secretary of Agriculture, who is calling colleagues, trying to sell them the same bill of goods, telling them: Don't worry, the money is going to be available; we have been assured by the Office of Management and Budget.

Please, don't anybody be misled. The Office of Management and Budget has nothing, zero, to do with writing the next budget resolution. I am chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. I can tell you the same amount of money is not going to be available next year as is available now. If anybody will just do a quick reality check, they will understand that what I am saying is true.

No. 1, on the revenue side, the revenues are going down as a result of the economic slowdown and as a result of this sneak attack on the United States. The economy is weaker. It is generating less revenue, so less money will be available on that side of the equation.

On the spending side of the equation, the expenditures are going up, and up dramatically. There is more money to defend the Nation, more money for counterterrorism, more money for item after item that is coming to our attention as a result of this vicious attack on our country on September 11. Just a commonsense approach would tell you less money is going to be available next year—perhaps dramatically less money.

For anybody to suggest that they have an assurance from the administration—or anybody else who is outside of the Congress where these issues are decided—that resources are going to be available, they are not dealing with reality. They are not dealing with reality. For these farm organizations to send a letter to our leadership telling them, oh, don't worry about getting the job done this year with the money that is available in this budget because they have gotten assurance from the administration that the money is going to be available next year—they have